

# Thess 5

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn now to the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 5, and we will consider the first 11 verses.

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Now, these verses clearly speak to us of the suddenness and the unexpectedness of the second coming of Christ.

[ 2 : 10 ] As we've seen in our studies in this letter, the Thessalonians expected the second coming of Christ in their own time.

And they became quite excited about the prospect and indeed became almost fanatical concerning it.

It was because of that that the apostle in the course of writing to them has to correct these excesses and remind them that it is wrong for them to stop working because they expected the second coming any day and wrong for them to turn away from that which was their duty, their daily tasks. Because of their obsession with the second coming, they were open to various views that people expounded in their midst and they fell and they fell easy prey to such teaching as Jesus warned his disciples against lo, Christ is here or lo, Christ is there.

Easy prey to any person who came into their midst and who suggested that the coming was not only imminent but immediate. the apostle therefore in this chapter explains to them and to us his own views on the second coming of Christ regarding the time of the second coming.

[ 4 : 07 ] You remember that last week we noticed in the fourth chapter that the Thessalonian Christians were so taken up with the second coming that they thought that the Christians their contemporaries who had died were going to miss out on the glory and the rapture of the second coming and so Paul corrects the wrongness of that view and he shows them that the Christians who had died will not miss out at all that they will share in the blessedness and in the glory and in the visible glory of the presence and the visible presence of Jesus at his coming.

Now here Paul doesn't at all deny the possibility of Christ's coming any time.

He says that in verse 10 whether we wake or sleep we shall live together with him. He doesn't deny the possibility of it.

On the other hand he doesn't assert the coming of our Lord. He doesn't assert it as strongly as the Thessalonian believers did.

He didn't assert the immediate prospect of his second coming. So as we look at these 11 verses we have to ask ourselves first of all what then is Paul's teaching concerning the imminence of the second coming?

[ 5 : 53 ] Well in the first place I'm reiterating the teaching of our Lord that we've read in Matthew chapter 24 he says that the time of his coming is uncertain.

that that is hidden in the Father's power. And when he says that the times and seasons brethren ye have no need to die right unto you you know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night for when they shall say peace and safety then certain destruction cometh upon them as travel upon a woman with child and they shall not escape.

he is there telling us that they themselves had been taught this probably by himself. You know he says perfectly well that no one knows the exact time or date of our Lord's coming.

That's the first thing he says. Jesus himself had told the disciples no person not even the son of man knoweth when the day of the Lord will be.

And you notice that in this passage as another passage in the Bible and even in the Old Testament in the prophecy of Amos the day of a second coming or the time of a second coming is spoken of as the day of the Lord.

[ 7 : 22 ] That is one meaning of these terms in the Bible. It speaks of his second coming. Well in the first place he says no one knows when he is going to come and you yourselves have been taught that.

Secondly we do know he says that his coming will be with abrupt suddenness. He will come quite suddenly and that is why he takes in the illustration of the thief the burglar who comes when is least expected perhaps when people are asleep at night when people are drunk in their own homes at night they're not aware of what is going on he steals him stealthily and then he's away and they wake up in the morning they discover their house has been burgled well he is going to second coming of the Lord is going to be with similar suddenness and with similar shock it will be the shock of destruction as he says here in verses 3 and 9 to the unbeliever they he will come for the destruction of those who haven't believed that he's going to come at all and therefore he stresses the suddenness and the unexpectedness of the second coming of our

Lord and then he says something else this is the thing that gripped them and this is the meaning really of verse 10 whether we sleep or wake what he says is that it doesn't really matter whether we are dead whether we have died or whether we are alive that really is of no consequence at all and he stresses his belief in that and then he says this about the second coming that everyone should make it his and her responsibility to prepare for the second coming you brethren he says are not in darkness at that day should overtake you as a thief you are all the children of light and the children of day you are not of the darkness of night therefore don't sleep as do others but watch and be sober for they that sleep sleep in the night and they will be drunken and drunken in the night but let us of the day be sober putting on the breastplate of faith and love and for unhelmet the hope of salvation that is really at the heart of this passage here the need to prepare for the second coming of

Christ to be sure that we are ready and then another teaching that he has here we saw this last week and again he mentions it that the Christians who have died before he comes and the Christians who are alive when he comes will be reunited at the second coming of Christ that for which they have looked forward will occur we will be together with the Lord and then finally the second coming of Jesus and this is all in the first 11 verses here the second coming of Jesus is to issue in the full and the final and complete salvation of the church God he says has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation that whether we live or die that we that we wake or sleep we should live together with him who died for us when he comes he is going to come to complete the salvation of his church well now let us look at one or two things in particular in connection with these teachings first of all the secondness of the second coming secondly preparation for the second coming and then finally full salvation at the second coming first of all then the suddenness of a second coming now I mentioned that these verses indicate to us that they themselves have been taught this already by

Paul and it seems that they had forgotten the teaching that they had received and as I said the day of the Lord is spoken of here this is the term that was used very often in ancient writings for the second coming and what he says about it is this the coming of the Lord will be devastatingly sudden and and it will come as a shattering shock to those who are not prepared for it you know that in the teaching of Jesus and this verse was asked last Sunday night that the congregation fell into the second coming you know that Jesus himself indicated that it would be so sudden so unexpected it would come as such a shock that two people would be working in the field one will be taken and the other left two will be grinding at the mill one taken and the other left maybe a reference to what we have in chapter 4 here that the Christians who are alive when he comes will be caught up into the air to be forever with the Lord and those with whom they were working may be side by side those with whom they were walking the streets or perhaps living in their homes will be left left to be judged in the judgment of damnation when he at rather the coming of the law that is the suddenness with which he will come and there is nothing that shows the suddenness of it quite like verse 3 for when they shall say peace and safety then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travel upon a woman with child and they shall not escape people be wrapped up in comparative ease and

comfort assuring each other that all is well not caring one little bit about the things of [ 13 : 33 ] God or about the things of the last day there will be this security which is an absolute illusion right up to the end in the lives of many people they will not be moved by the signs which will accompany his second coming in the main they will not be moved some would be filled with terror but in the main people will adopt an attitude where they couldn't care less about these things there will be the hardness and the blindness and the indifference upon the human heart and upon the human mind and when Jesus spoke about this he gave an illustration of it and I think you would do as well to remember this because I think that many of us when we think of the second coming and when we think of the signs which are going to precede the second coming we'll see that later on when we come to the second letter to the

Thessalonians and by the way just in case some of you may be becoming rather weary with a series of studies like this there are only two of them that I intend to direct attention to in chapters one and two of the second epistle then I'll draw these studies to a close two more God willing some of us get the impression you know that the vast majority of people when these cosmic signs will appear that people will be struck with terror and they'll be afraid and then they'll try to find salvation they'll try to turn to the Lord they'll become religious all of a sudden I think that's a wrong impression entirely of what is going to be the case with the majority of people when the Lord comes again and Jesus teaches what Paul really illustrates here emphasise here in chapter 3 he illustrates it with a picture of life when the old world was destroyed when

Jesus comes this present world is going to be destroyed again but not with a flood but with fire and you remember when the old world was destroyed by flood most Noah was told that the flood was going to come and he began to build an ark in accordance with God's command and he took over a hundred years building that ark and as he built it he preached for a hundred years to his generation to his contemporaries he witnessed and he told them he was as the Bible tells a preacher of righteousness he told them that God was going to come to judge the world with a flood and not a soul believed no one out with his own family believed a word that was said and they lived in complete ease they were married and given in marriage they were eating and drinking going about their tasks sinning as they pleased in complete ignorance and disbelief and unbelief of this great coming event and then it happened the flood came and they were all destroyed so says Jesus shall the coming of the son of man be it will be sudden unexpected unbelieved unlooked for it will come with a tremendous shock it is inevitable just on the tourist days he uses are here just as a woman in travel the child must be born and interestingly enough this is the word that Luke uses in the Acts of the Apostles when he speaks of the resurrection of Jesus that the earth wasn't capable of holding him he had to burst out of the earth in resurrection power so will it so it is in birth the child must be born the child must come and so it is with the day of the Lord it must come and there is nothing that will stop it coming it is absolutely inevitable and the second illustration he uses the illustration of the burglar the pain and the shock of discovering that the house has been burgled he comes when you don't expect him he comes when you're unaware you're surprised with his coming and you know the pain and the anguish and the shock that is discovered when all that was so dear to you is taken away from you know what's interesting any of you here tonight who may have had your home burgled

I'll always remember the shock of discovering that the house that we had in Glasgow was burgled we were out at a meeting when we came home discovered that many precious things things things of great sentimental value had been taken away it leaves an awful feeling in your heart to discover that well my friend believe it or not that is the feeling that the coming of the Lord is going to bring to those who are not looking for it those who are not prepared for it and those who are going to be destroyed at his coming not annihilated but destroyed from the presence of the Lord as the second epistle tells us taken away forever more from the favour and the blessing and the forbearance and the available forgiveness and blessing of God through faith in Jesus

[ 20 : 01 ] Christ and as we just leave this first point going to the second may I impress this upon your heart tonight the importance of having gospel privileges and the importance of having the opportunity to turn in faith to God you know the second coming may not appear tonight but one thing that could come to you tonight is the Lord coming to take your soul to account to himself in death and isn't it terrible how many people are found completely unprepared for that coming and the question that is addressed to you is a very simple one are you ready for the coming of the Lord which leads quite naturally into the second point here preparation for the second coming and it

answers this question how can one be ready for the second coming and it goes about answering that question by contrasting two things and two people he contrasts the darkness with the light he contrasts the night with the day and he speaks of unbelievers as those who are of the darkness and of the night and he speaks of believers as children of the day and of the light now children of the day here doesn't mean children of the day of the

Lord it isn't the day of the Lord that is meant by the children of the day in verse 5 it is just a description that he gives of Christians and what does he mean by it well we are not in too great difficulty when we come to look at the difference between the children of the light and the children of darkness the children of night and the children of the day the Bible in many places speaks of unbelievers as in darkness they are in darkness and they are darkness and they are heading for darkness they live in the night and their deeds are done in the night and they're afraid to come to the light these are many of the passages that the New Testament speaks of particularly when it speaks of unbelievers what do they mean it means that an unbeliever is a person who's in the darkness of ignorance living a life of sin and unbelief who is estranged in the darkness of his own life and mind from the life that is

God and that is Christ this whole life is wrong and it is distorted he doesn't see the glory of God or of Jesus Christ in the gospel and he's asleep he lives this life which is full of illusion you know that when you're asleep you tend to dream and then you're waking up and you see that much of what you've seen you discover much of what you've seen has been rubbish at least you hope it is and you've lived in an unreal in an illusory world and that is the way it is with the unbeliever the life that he lives isn't real it isn't the life that he's meant to live he's meant to be awake as I've seen a minute unto the claims and the call of God upon his life and as he's asleep he is helplessly exposed to him to the wrath of

God this is the pic the Bible has of a person who dies in his sin God comes him as though he were asleep and insensible and insensitive he has not responded to the claims of God upon him and the Lord comes and takes him he is also a child of the night this is the sphere in which he lives the standards of his life are standards which are associated with the darkness and as Jesus said he lives like that and he's afraid to come to the light he doesn't want to come and you know there are lots of young people here tonight and I fully believe that's the way that you react to the gospel you react the way many of us did there's nothing perhaps there is nothing that you have against Christianity or against conversion but you don't want it just now you will wait you don't want to come to the light you see the light is going to spoil what you have yourself and what

Jesus says of you is this that your life is so wrapped up in the darkness of unbelief and sin that you don't want to come to the light may I challenge you with that question here this evening is that the way you are are you afraid or not you don't want to come you are sitting there in the stubbornness of unbelief well that's darkness the darkness of sin the sphere in which you live and you're unsharred there or you're spiritually asleep in that condition you don't want to come to the light and another thing he says of that that people like that he says they're drunk in the night I think the first of this of course there are people drunk in the day now but mainly it is at night that people get drunk and it raises the question why do people get drunk probably because it is a condition in which they have so much satisfaction so much content resentment and so much enjoyment but as we've seen those of us who come to pray meeting on

[ 26 : 27 ] Wednesday night in the epistle to the Ephesians Paul said this don't be drunk with wine but be drunk with the spirit because getting drunk with wine is wrong there is success that is in other words and here I quote to you words of a physician who became a doctor Dr.

Martin Lloyd Jones who said in one of his sermons on that passage in Ephesians there are some people who think that drink is a stimulant but he says it isn't a stimulant drink is a depressant drink doesn't stimulate you it only depresses you drink doesn't make you more of a man or of a woman it makes you less it takes away from you your senses it takes away from you your control you are not in control of yourself when you are drunk and this is what Jesus this is what the writer says of people whose lives are lived in sin they are not in control of their lives something else is or someone else is sin is but you see says Paul does far better to have the spirit in control of your lives therefore don't be drunk with wine but be filled with the spirit and the way to do that is to come to

Jesus to come to the light to come to the fountain of life and find there all what you need no he says to the Christians in Thessalonica you aren't like that you are of the light you are children of the day the standards of unbelief are not your standards the standards of a sinful life these aren't your

standards at all your standards are the standards of righteousness and holiness and knowledge and happiness all that God is God is light Christ is the light of the world in his passion and in his work in the holiness that is his character in the righteousness that is his character and in the blessedness and the contentment and happiness that commitment to him brings into the life and the passion that he speaks of here is in a state of grace restored to the favor and to the fellowship and to the blessing of

God well he says you maintain your standards watch and be sober be active in the exercise of your Christian faith be wary of spiritual dangers that's the meaning of be sober be wary be on the lookout see that your eyes are focused properly see that someone else the Lord is in control of your life don't lose control of these things remember the thief and remember what he does and remember how anxious the devil is to catch you off your guard and to get you away from that exercise of Christian faith and love and everything goes on to say cultivate faith love and hope let us who are the days be sober putting on the breastplate of faith and love and for unhelmet the hope of salvation here's the picture of the soldier this is the way the

Christian is to be he says and there are two things that he tells us of the soldier here the two things brought before us in this picture the soldier has got a helmet on and he's got a breastplate on you know in those days they wore suits of armour and these articles of their suit of armour were there to protect them because in hand to hand combat the head and the heart were particularly vulnerable and they had to be covered and this is what he says the Christian your faith and your love and your hope are particularly vulnerable watch them watch them be sure that you give them proper exercise keep believing in God keep loving Christ and keep looking forward in hope to the day of the Lord to the coming of his salvation maintain in constant exercise your faith and your love and your hope so that you are ready when he comes this now is the picture and this is how we are to be ready this is how we are to prepare for his coming what are you to do believe in

[ 31 : 34 ] God love the Lord Jesus and look forward in hope to his coming be expectant and be watchful and be vigilant and be on your guard and don't drop your guard don't be a fool and go back to the standards of the world but be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ and keep going are you now ready for the coming of the Lord do you have faith do you love the Lord Jesus and is your hope directed to the future blessedness with which he comes which brings us to our final point the blessedness or the salvation with which he is going to come for he says

God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by your Lord Jesus Christ who died for us that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him the first thing he tells us here is this that the death of Jesus has secured salvation for the Christian the death of Jesus makes it certain that the Christian will be saved you remember the way Paul put it writing to the Romans in chapter 5 verse 9 God verses 8 and 9 God commendeth his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us much more than being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath through him and again in chapter 8 he that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us all things the foundation of our salvation is the death of

Christ the foundation of our hope for completed salvation is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in other words he has he has purchased full salvation for us now what does that mean in this context full salvation God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation well it means many things and I just enumerate them in closing here this evening it means the highest exaltation for the believer it means the complete and the perfection the completeness and the perfection of our nature in the presence of God it means secondly the restoration of the image of God to our souls it means that in our mind in our heart in our affections in our wills in our thoughts we will be perfectly holy like

Christ himself it means the removal of sin from our lives the removal of all that pains us and annoys us in this world it means that as well it means resurrection from the grave you see Paul is saying to these Thessalonians look here he says you people you think that those who have died have missed out on the glory of the second coming of Christ but they haven't when he comes you and they will be changed even in your bodies to be like Jesus Christ he had told the Philippians when he comes he will fashion our vile bodies the body of our humiliation the body we have tonight it will be fashioned like into his glorious body the body will be made perfect it will not be capable of change as it is tonight subject rather to change as it is tonight it will not you will not have instruments through which evil will pour into your soul or instruments with which you will commit sin at all full

salvation means that the faculties of our soul and the instruments the limbs of our bodies will be both inlets and outlets of blessedness in the service of

Jesus Christ in heaven above may I elicit it like this you and I switch on our televisions and no matter how righteous a life you may try to live there are things that you see on television things that you see in the media in the press and things that you read in newspapers and in books that bring as it were their own evil and insidious influences into your life they are corrupting influences upon you but you see in heaven when Jesus comes again rather at the second coming of our Lord when we will have bodies made like unto his body there will be nothing that you will see or hear but that which will bring floods of blessedness and bliss and peace into your soul not a thing and what a wonderful prospect that is no wonder

[ 38 : 02 ] Paul would cry oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death he wanted complete conformity well we have been appointed he says to obtain that salvation and large capacities of soul to serve all the faculties of our soul and the instruments of our bodies as inlets and outlets of blessedness in the service of God the ability and the power to serve him in perfection and to serve him eternally and again may I illustrate it to you do you know what it is to pray and when you pray oh and this is an awful thing when you pray you know you go on your knees perhaps you may stand and you're using words and perhaps you come to yourself and your mind has been somewhere else perhaps the devil with the ability he has has been able to close in your mind and to present something else to you you pray and you're thinking about what you're going to do tomorrow or what you did last night you see our powers of concentration are so limited but in heaven your powers will be focused completely upon the

Lord Jesus Christ and there will never cross your mind a thought that will take you away from the perfection and the blessedness of service as you sing his praises as you extol his virtues and perhaps even as there is that eternal communion and fellowship with one another in the Lord there won't be a wrong thought crossing your mind that's what complete salvation is going to be the restoration to perfection deliverance from toil and stress from all the fatigue and the pain that you and I have to endure in this world and the proclamation of the glory of his blessed name throughout the endless ages of eternity verse 10 sums it up who died for us that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with the

Lord that's it it's the word life which conveys to you the idea of holiness and happiness and immortality it is life with him companionship association with Jesus participation in his life and participation in the blessedness of heaven above it is to be forever with the Lord there was nothing that so captivated the heart and the mind of Paul quite like this to be with Christ is far better and there is one other thing here we shall live together with him and I mentioned this last week this is one of the constant strains of this epistle Christians whether they have died or whether they are alive will be together with the Lord there is this whole idea of looking forward in hope and in expectancy to the reunion that is going to occur when he comes again

God he says has appointed us not to wrath nor destruction nor to be cut off from this but he has appointed us to this greatest blessedness of all to be together with him he has taken the initiative he has sent his son into the world to die to secure this blessing for us it has been done for us he has done it and he brings together there the two great doctrines of the new testament the sovereignty of God the initiative that he took he has provided it but there is also our responsibility towards it watch and pray watch and be sober be awake be vigilant and be active in the exercise of your Christian faith because as sure as you sit in this church tonight Christ is coming again there is nothing in the world more certain than that as he came once he will come again and I leave you with the question that was posed earlier on how ready are you for his coming and if you're not I will tell you of three things that you can ask the Lord for tonight that you can ask him for even as you sit in this pew Lord draw my heart in faith to thyself Lord teach me to love thee and give me a hope in thee so that

[ 44 : 14 ] I can look forward with expectancy to thy coming again let us pray bless to us the word of thy blessed grace and enable us oh Lord to understand what thou art saying and help us to put it into practice in our lives go before us this evening prepare us for all that thou hast in store for us and forgive us for Jesus sake Amen I for u us little I question

I love